

Saga™

FIONA STAPLES BRIAN K. VAUGHAN



CHAPTER
TWENTY
SEVEN



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SEVEN

Saga

ART BY
FIONA STAPLES

WRITTEN BY
BRIAN K. VAUGHAN

LETTERS + DESIGN BY
FONOGRAFIKS

COORDINATED BY
ERIC STEPHENSON



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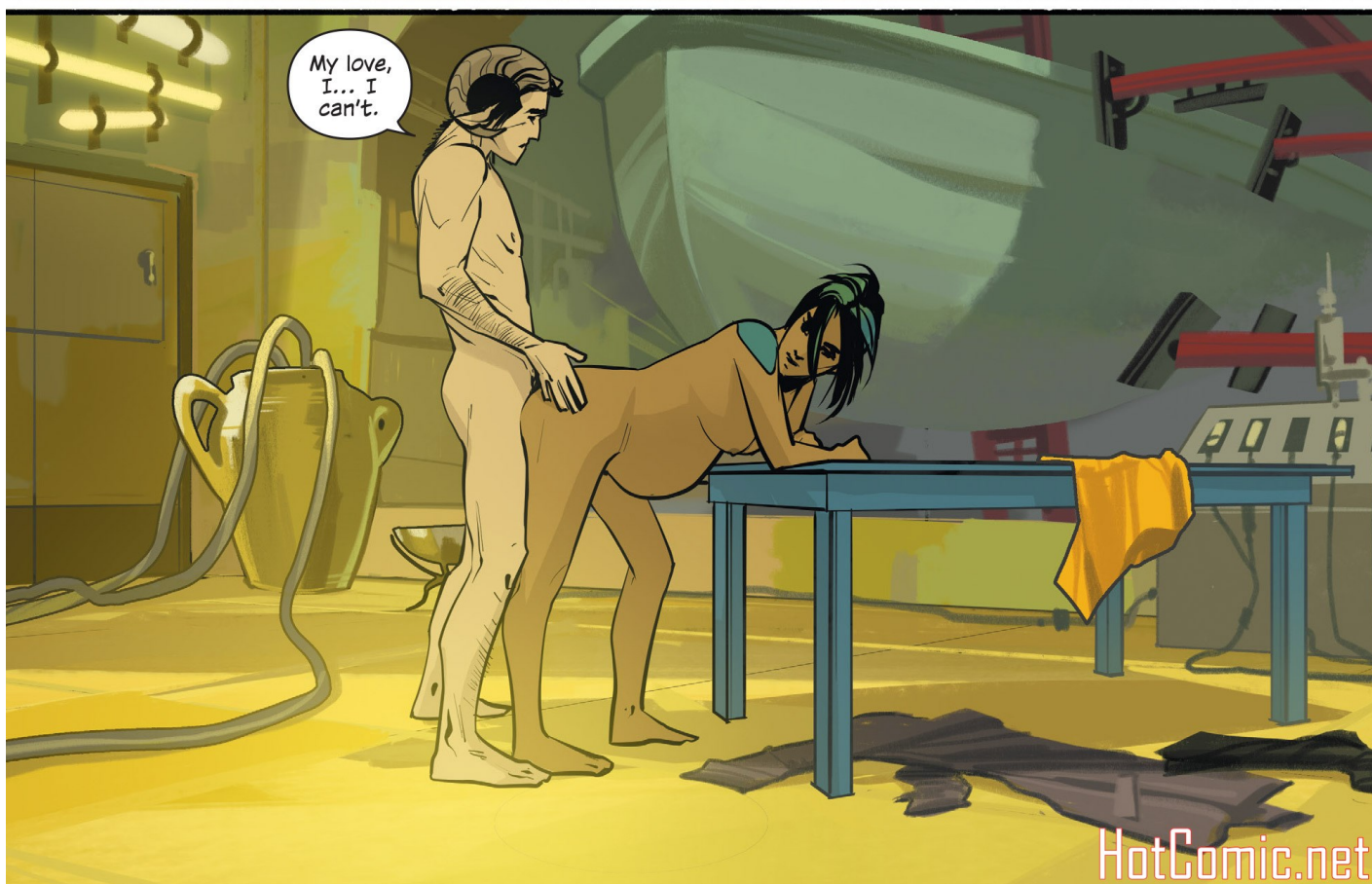
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It was the worst day of my life.

Was... was it on the battlefield?

Because you and I **both** did terrible things while we were soldiers.



No. I mean, yes, obviously, I hurt **countless** people during our time at war, but this was different.

I was seven years old.



Seven?

You were just a kid!

That doesn't excuse what I did.



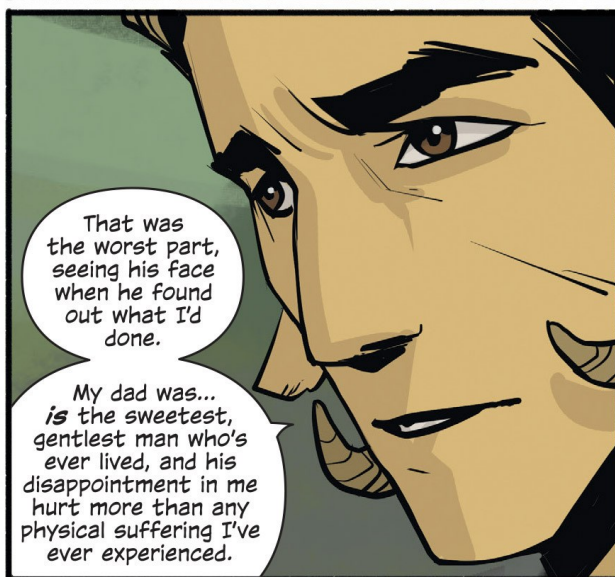
Growing up, our neighbors had a daughter a bit younger than I.

One day, I caught her in our backyard practicing **fire spells** on my family's dog. She'd badly burned his tail, and he was making these... these terrible yelps of pain.



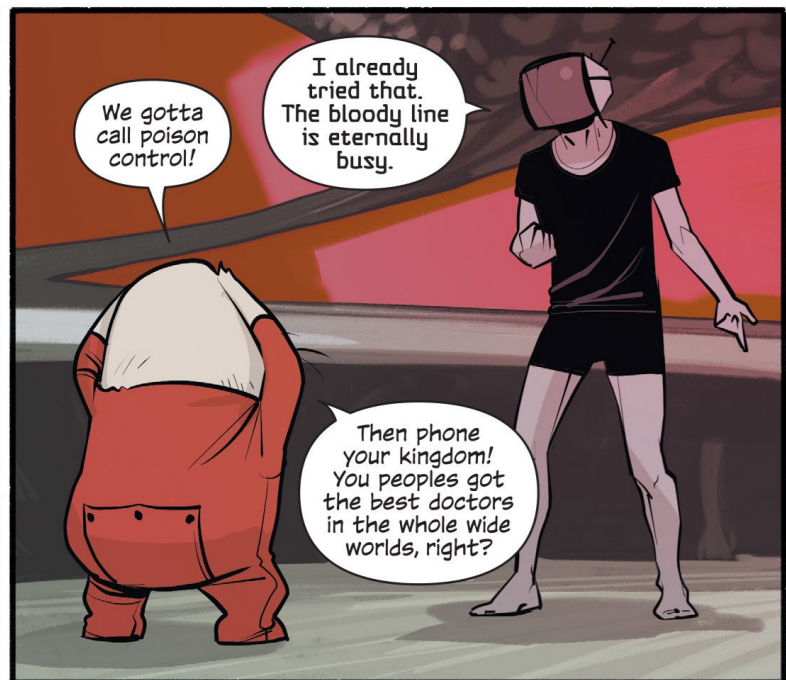
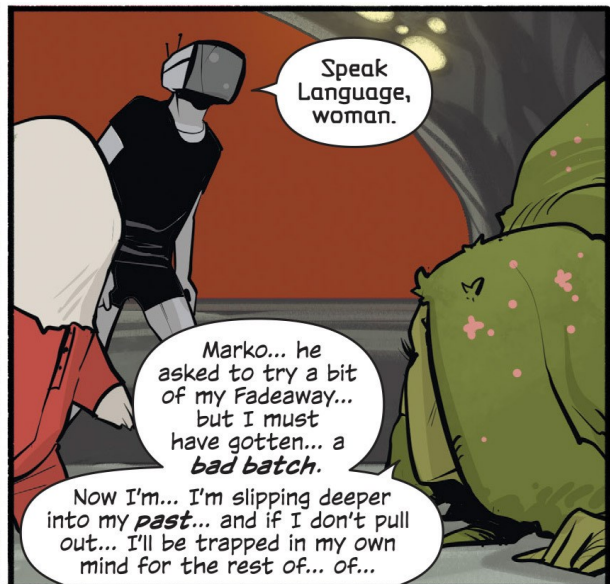
Watching this person casually hurt another living thing, especially a smaller, defenseless animal...

...something inside of me just **snapped**.





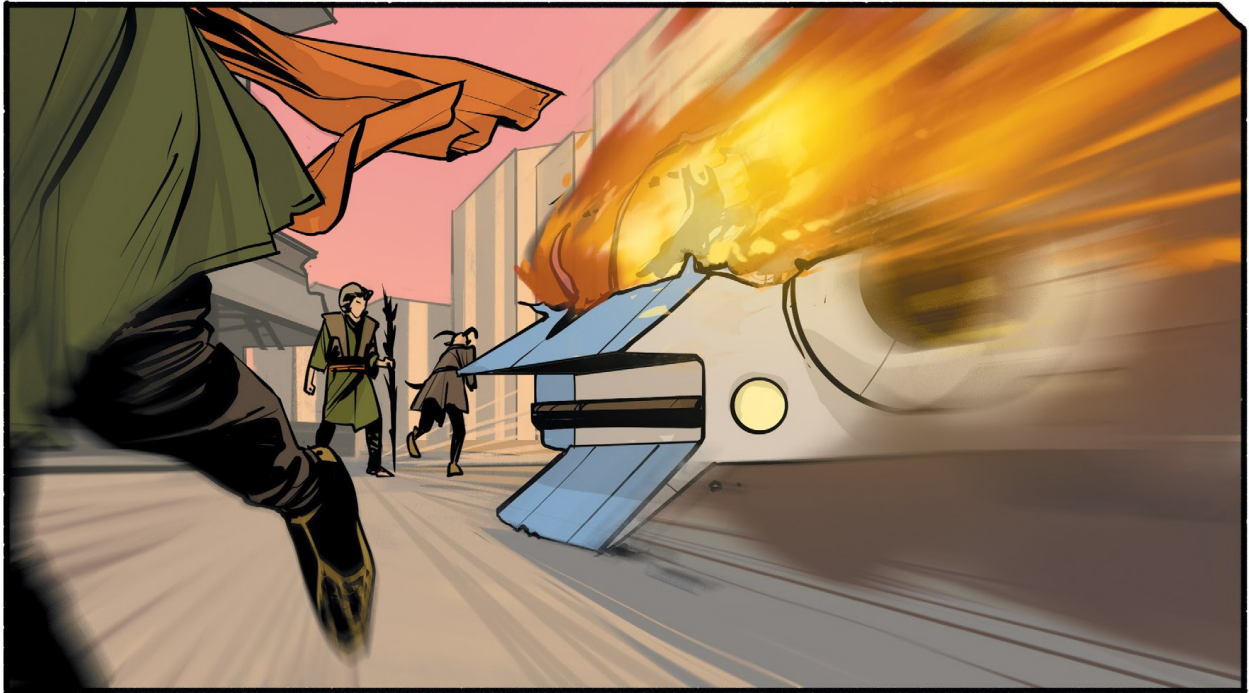






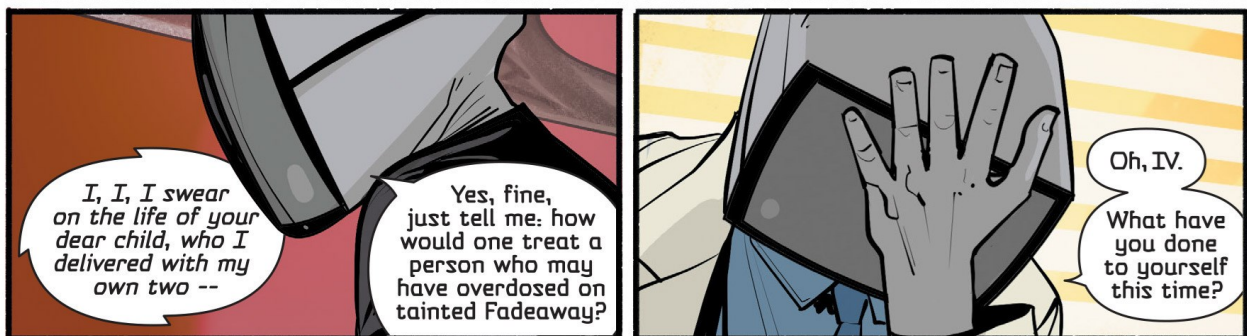


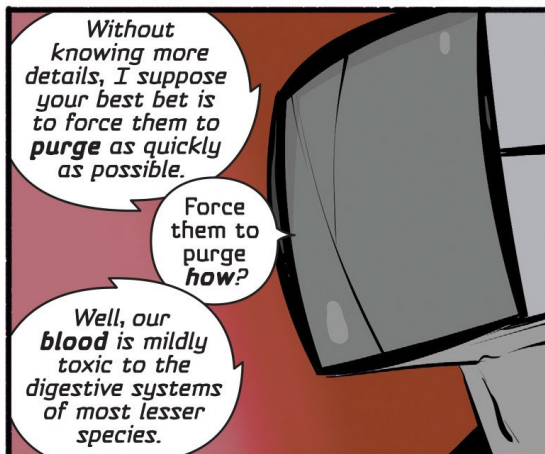
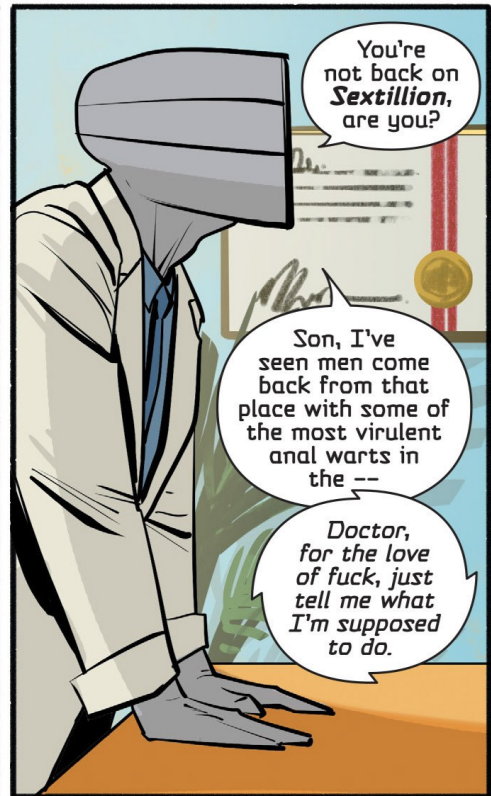


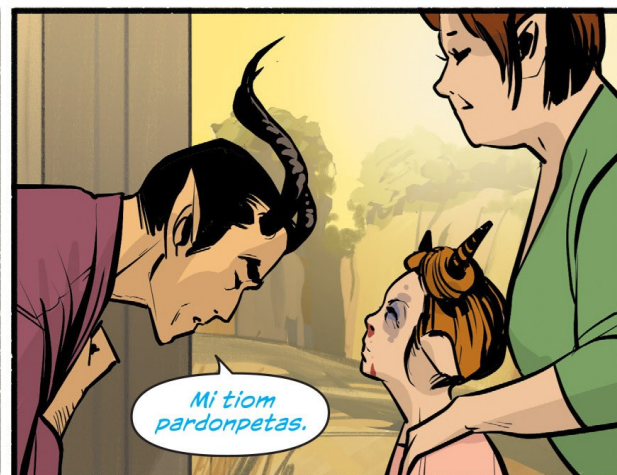
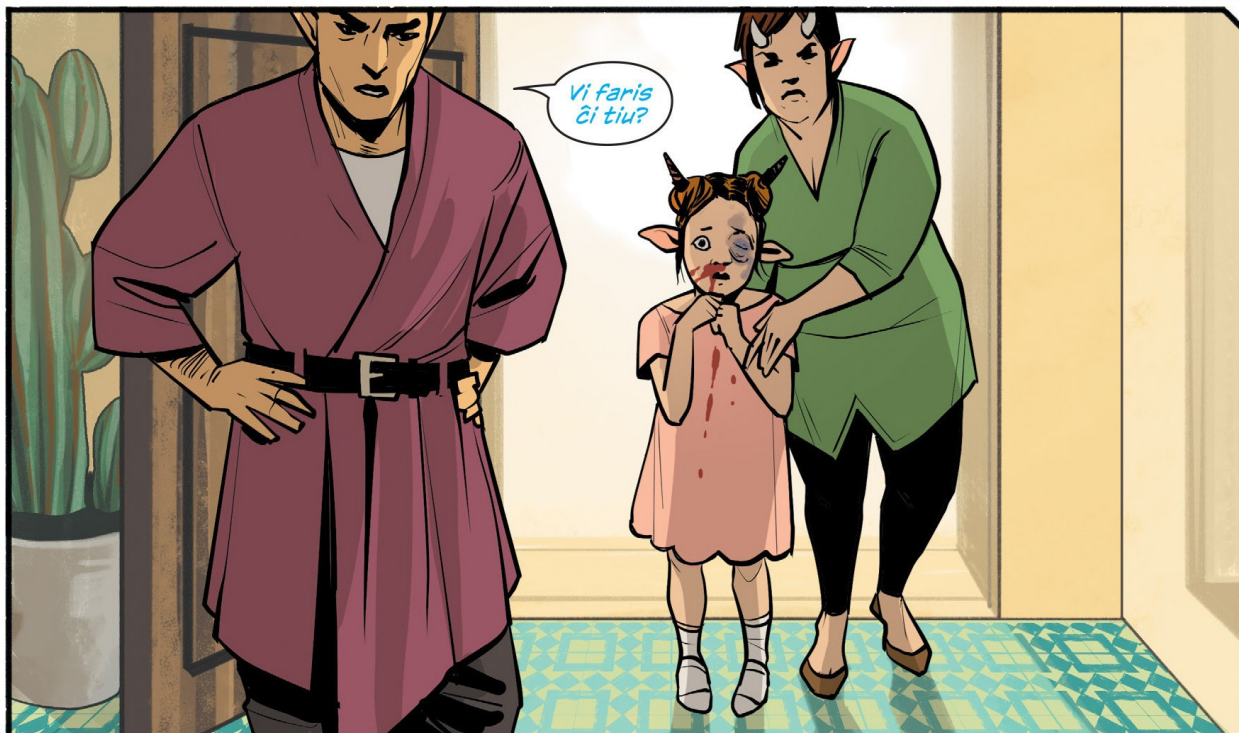


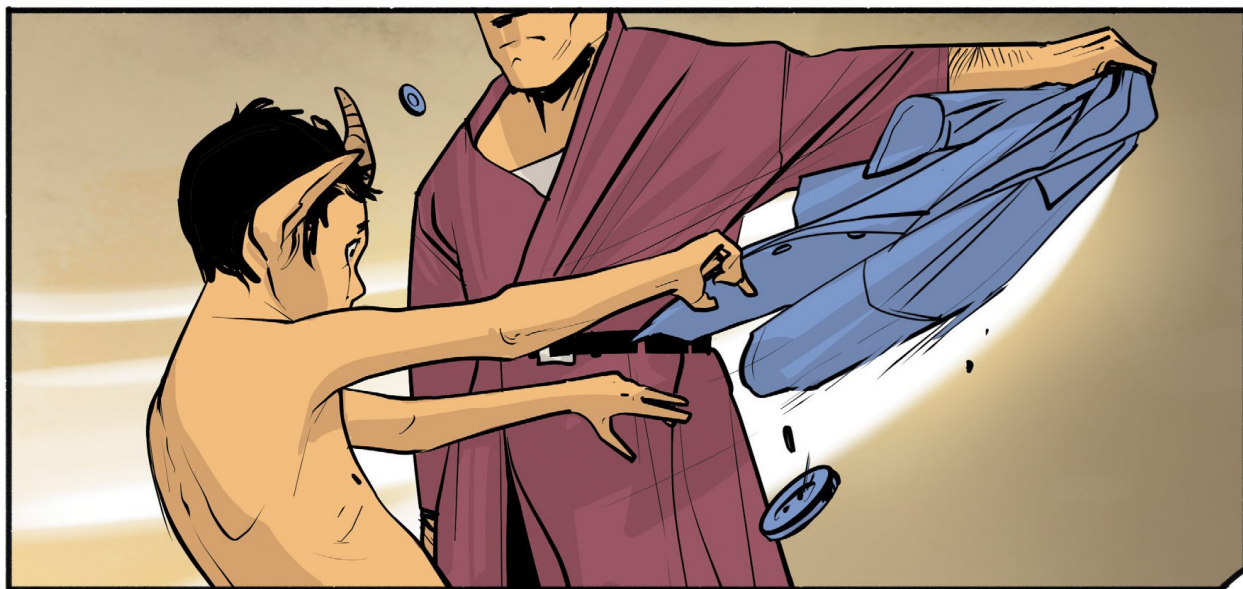
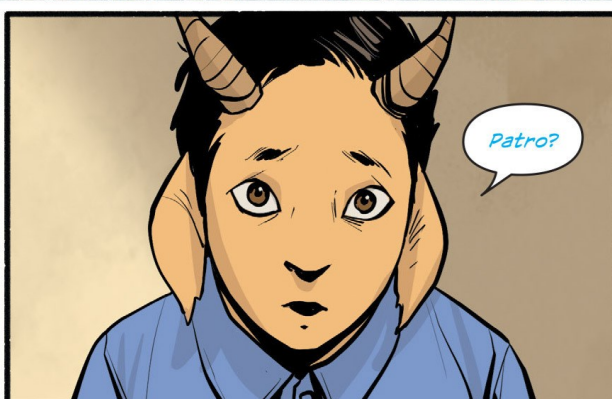
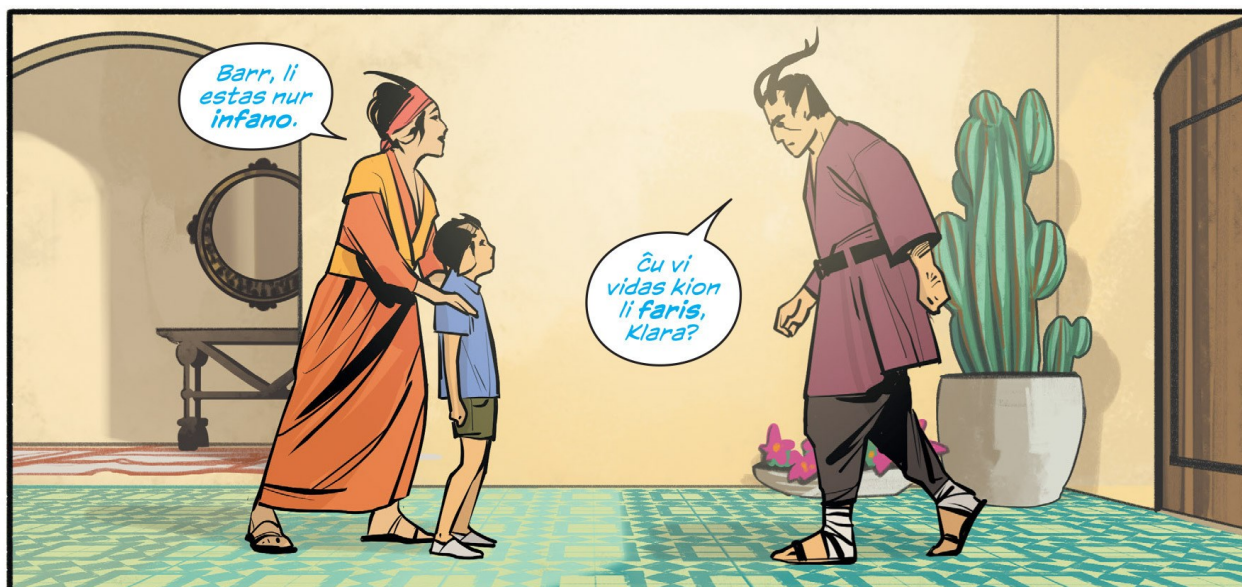


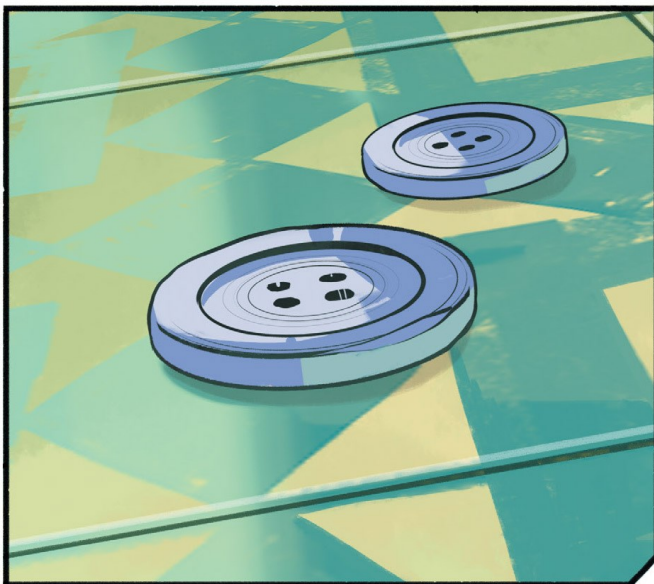
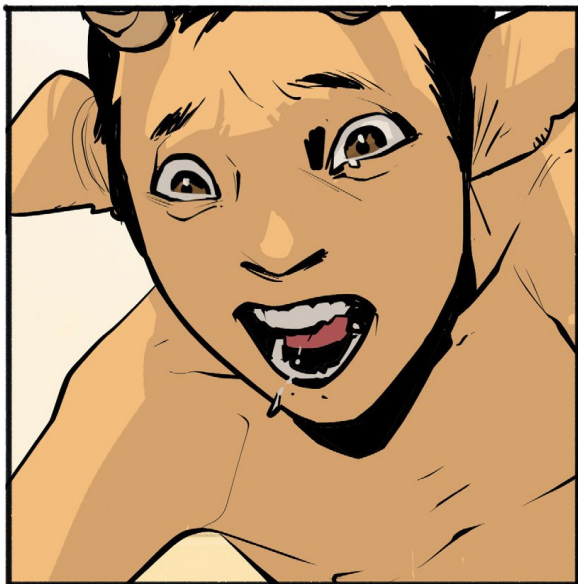


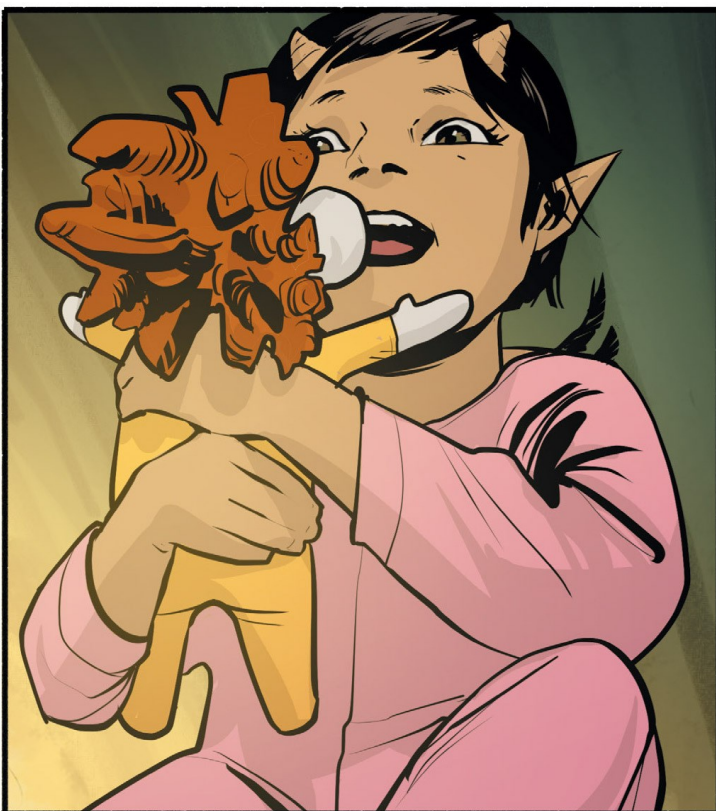
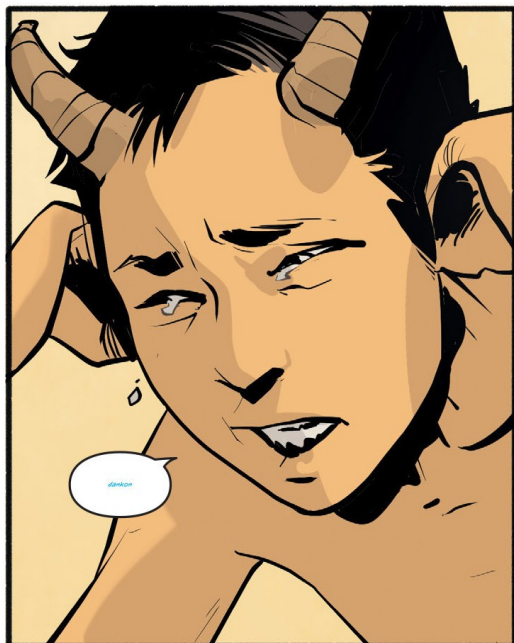


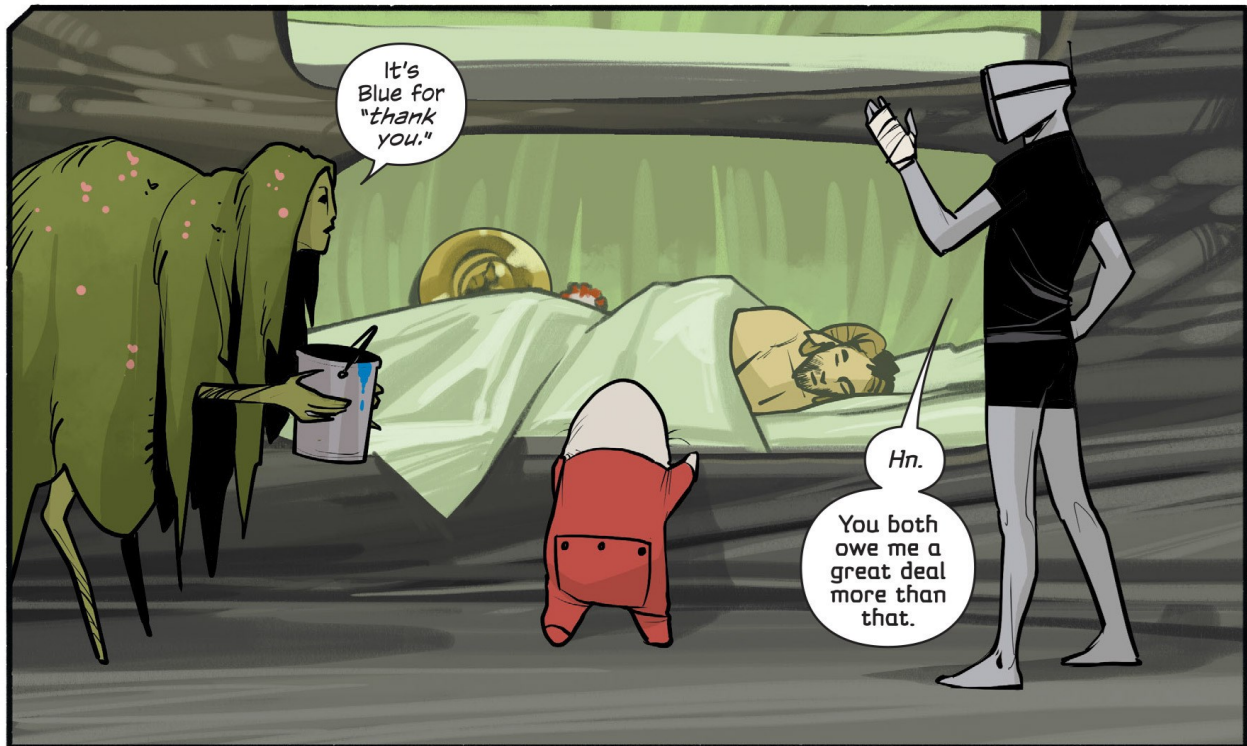
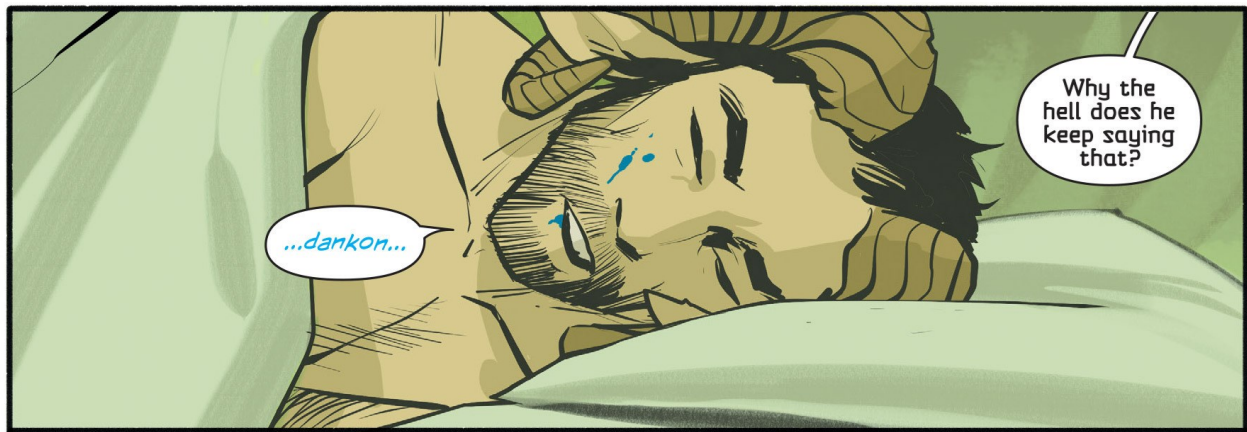


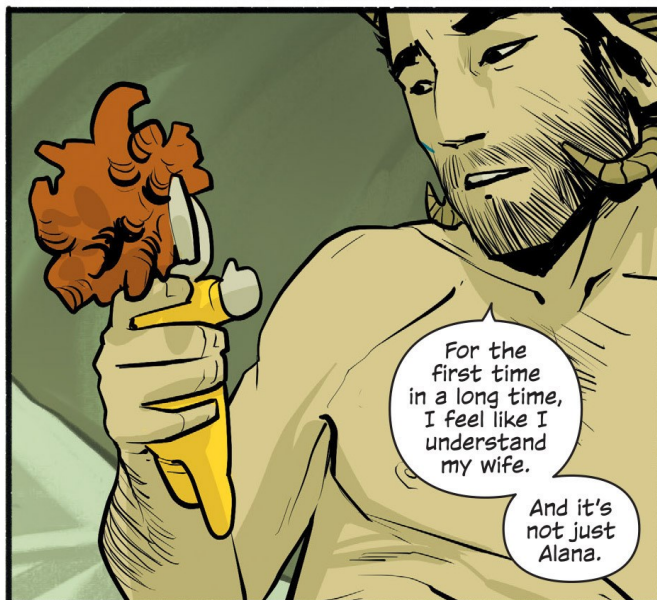
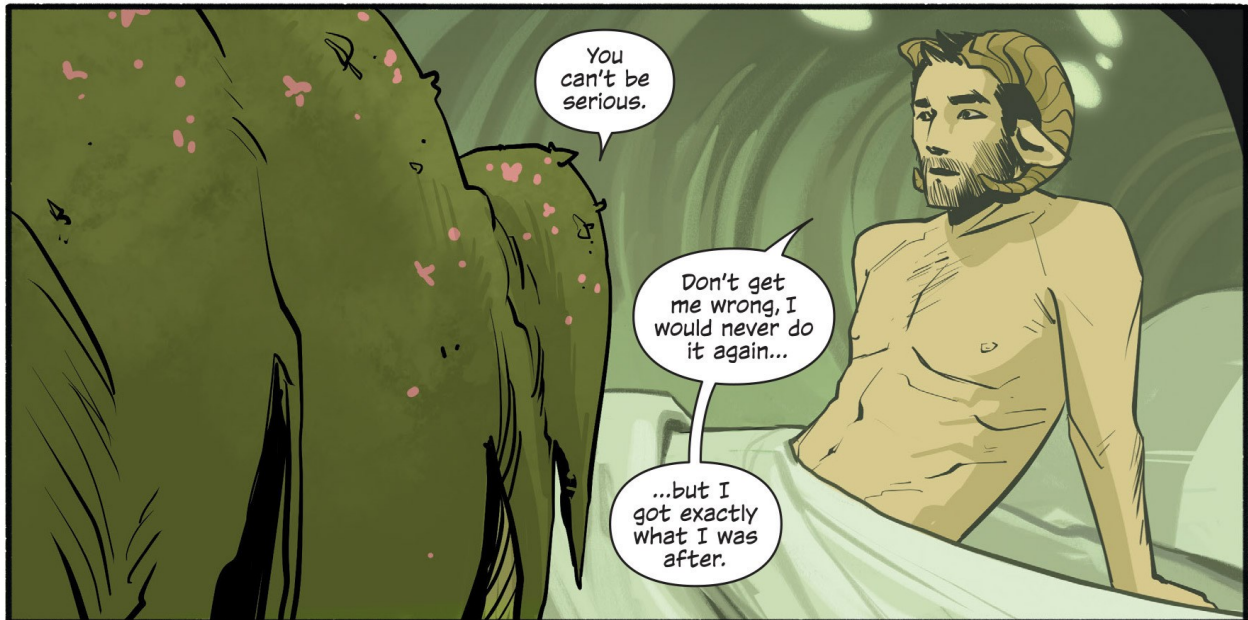














And I'm
going to cut
his fucking
head off.

TO BE CONTINUED

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Wait, is *Beautiful Darkness* my new favorite graphic novel of all time?

Brian here, and I finished reading Drawn & Quarterly's edition of this glorious French comic from watercolor painter Kerascoët and writer Fabien Vehlmann a few weeks back, but not a day has gone by since then that I haven't thought about the book.

I guess you could call the story a kind of fairy tale about human nature, but it's WAY more harrowing than that, as evidenced by an early image that's probably the most powerful and affecting splash page in the history of the medium. Truly. I dare you to pick it up and disagree with me.

Anyway, with that out of my system, let's get back to jawing about our universe of increasingly dark beauty...

Dear Brian, Fiona, and everyone at Saga,

My niece is going to graduate college this year, and I'd love to get her a signed copy of the deluxe Saga hardcover. Would that be possible?

Thanks so much,

Marion U.

Lincoln, Nebraska

We're so sorry, Marion, but because *Saga* is the work of just three creators who happen to live in three different countries, it's just not possible for us to sign and return comics to readers in a remotely timely fashion.

BUT... if you happen to be visiting the San Francisco area, I think there may be some signed copies of *Saga* at both Comix Experience and the Isotope, and if that's not possible, at the time of this writing, our friends at *MidtownComics.com* still have a few copies of our deluxe hardcover signed by both Staples and me, featuring this lovely exclusive bookplate from Fiona:



Hope that helps, and please send our congratulations to your niece!

Dear Brian & Fiona,

It has been a very perilous and mysterious year of my life and I am very glad to have had your characters for company.

All my starry-eyed affection,*

Matilda

New York, NY

**Especially for you, Fiona. <3*

Yeah, yeah, Fiona gets all the starry-eyed affection, but what about ol' Baldy? Sure, I've got the infinitely easier job, but writers are much needier than artists. Where oh where is MY handwritten tenderness...?

Dear Brian and Fiona,

Congratulations on 25 issues of Saga!

I feel like I should have written in to To Be Continued a long time ago. Saga has been a huge success here at Alpha Comics in Calgary, Canada. This is, of course, the beautiful city where Fiona illustrates Saga.

In early 2012, when I read Saga's solicitation, I knew this was going to be a fantastic gateway comic. I had a promo in store that ran on Saga #1's release. Anyone who bought Saga #1 would also get a second copy FREE—in hopes that the second copy would go to a friend and a new comic fan would be born. Fiona caught wind of my promotion and emailed me to express thanks. She offered to visit the shop for a signing, and that signing became the first of many at the store.

Saga has been a long-standing bestseller at the shop, and has been one of the top three most subscribed-to comics at Alpha since the series began. Sometimes I'll see a new face in the shop and they'll tell me how they read and love Saga. I'll tell them Fiona is local and the usual result is a total freak-out. I can see the success of Saga encouraging other local artists to push themselves. It's had a real impact on the local scene.

Behind my counter is a Saga poster that we made and Fiona personally signed it for Alpha Comics. It's been there since April of 2012 and I have to turn down offers from fans all the time. Sorry folks, it has sentimental value. To me Saga is more than my favorite comic. It's woven into the fabric of my life. It's a big part of my livelihood and I want to thank you guys from the bottom of my heart for making such a great representation of the medium. I hope it inspires a whole new generation of comic creators.

Thanks,

Chris Humphries

Calgary, Alberta, Canada

Whoa, thank you for being such an incredible retailer/human

being, Chris, and I'm relieved to hear that your bold *Saga* 2-for-1 deal didn't bankrupt Alpha Comics.

But seriously, more Fiona-centric adoration? Come on, Hamburger K. Vaughan, dig into that mailbag and find a nice head-sweller for me, would you?

Dear Brian and Fiona,

*First of all, thanks a lot for making this awesome series! I've been reading comics extensively before, but *Saga* was the series that got me buying single issues and not just the trade paperbacks. I just could not wait six months to find out how the story continues and now I have subscribed to about ten series at my local comic book store (a shout-out to Comic Room Hamburg) and I don't know where to put all these issues.*

Anyway, thanks again for doing all this awesome work.

Best wishes from Germany,

Alex

Hamburg, Germany

Hamburger, you just picked this one because of the location, right? Come on, there's got to be some rapturous praise for yours truly in there somewhere...

Fiona,

This is Sarah and Jesse writing on the way home from our trip to Roswell, Albuquerque, White Sands and Lincoln National Forest near Ruidoso. Your art is the best art out of all the art. Have you ever been to White Sands? It's like you're on another planet.

Unsigned postcard

Goddammit, Burger!

Clearly, there's no fighting this, so we might as well turn things over to Fiona herself for a couple of letters. What's the word, Staples? Ever been to White Sands?

No, but after googling it I'm dying to go! It also looks pretty easy to draw, so I may steal it for a *Saga* location.

Dear Fiona,

You created something powerful and magical. Thank you.

Two questions:

1) *Has the success of *Saga* exceeded your hopes and dreams, or is there room to grow?*

2) *Are you working on anything else, and if so, what? There's something about how you draw the humanoid form that is especially appealing.*

Keep it up,

Matt

Ormand Beach, FL

P.S. Excuse the recycled paper. Trying to do my part for the environment (however little that may be).

Thanks, Matt!

I) It has way exceeded my career hopes and dreams, which were admittedly pretty lowly at first ("sell enough books that I won't miss doing work-for-hire") then a little bolder ("win an Eisner!"). But on a personal level, my goal with this book is to use it to become a better artist, which is an ongoing effort. So my ultimate hope is to get better from year to year!

2) I'm contributing variant covers to a few other Image titles, including the upcoming *Chrononauts* by Mark Millar and Sean Murphy. Later this year I'll also be drawing some issues of the only corporate character I've ever really cared about: ARCHIE! Mark Waid and I are starting a new series from #1, creating an origin story for the gang. So check it out, there are a fair number of humanoids in Riverdale.

Thank you for asking!

All right, back to work for you, your worshipfulness! But remember, you can always pester @FionaStaples on Twitter. For now, let's get back to glorious ME...

Dear *Saga* Creators (or just Brian, not sure who reads these),

*I have never written to a comic book before, and in fact really never want to write letters at all. So you should take it as an extreme compliment that *Saga* means this much to me. It is a truly special book. I love that even the "villainous" characters are incredibly complex and intricate. No one in this book feels one-note. I love nearly all the characters and can't decide on a favorite, which NEVER happens, I ALWAYS have a favorite. I love the relationship between Alana and Marko. I am very sad about the way things have been going with them. I have faith that they will work everything out eventually, and I get that everything can't be fucking fantastic all the time—because that's not how life is—but I gotta say it breaks my heart in the process.*

I would like to make a request. I fully recognize this won't happen, but I have to ask anyway. Please make "A Night Time Smoke" a real thing. It sounds like the best book ever. At the very least, give us more excerpts. But please just make it a real book. Maybe I'm in the minority on that. So just write a copy for me. That's fine.

*Well I think I shall end this here. Congratulations on *Saga*, the writing, the art, everything is great. Actually, in order to sound like less of a kiss-ass, I should probably say that *Saga* isn't perfect. And it isn't. Some issues are better than others. But nothing is perfect, dark makes light shine brighter—blah blah blah it doesn't matter because I still love *Saga*.*

Thanks,

Samantha S.

Chattanooga, TN

Okay, "not perfect," that's a start, I'll take it!

Thanks, Samantha. And believe it or not, a few legit prose editors have actually approached me about publishing a novel of *A Nighttime Smoke*, but I think that Heist's book is probably more powerful existing in your imagination than in print (especially because whatever I wrote wouldn't involve a certain object of everyone's starry-eyed affection).

Dear Brian,

*Hello! My name is Ben and I'm currently a 4th year PhD candidate in chemistry at the University of Virginia in the lovely (albeit humid) Charlottesville, Virginia. I started reading comics in my first year here and shortly after that *Saga* came out and I have been hooked ever since.*

In your latest issue you wrote, "Absolutely everything else is fair game... including questions about graduate school." Well, I'm here to take advantage. I studied English and Chemistry in my undergrad and while I love to read and write, chemistry

was my passion and it also seemed like a slightly safer career path. Anyway, here is my question: How do you turn your brain OFF? Being a graduate student is NOT a 9-5 or a 40-hour per week job. Becoming a graduate student is arguably masochistic because of the never-easing-up-ness of the field. So how do you tell yourself, "Okay, the day is over," because I get home and will eat dinner and run and shower etc. but I still think about what went wrong during the day and what I could do better tomorrow. My mentors and older grad students say I need to learn to relax or the creative juices will cease to flow. WOOT!! Another thing to do! The life of a grad student is quite exciting but, in that regard, it is hard to separate yourself from it. What do you do to delineate work and play?

Can't wait to read more Saga in 2015. See you then!

Ben

Charlottesville, VA

Great question, Ben. This reminds me of my favorite monologue ever, from Chekhov's *The Seagull*, as the character Trigorin discusses some of the pitfalls of being a working writer (from Marian Fell's public domain translation):

"As soon as I stop working I rush off to the theatre or go fishing, in the hope that I may find oblivion there, but no! Some new subject for a story is sure to come rolling through my brain like an iron cannonball. I hear my desk calling, and have to go back to it and begin to write, write, write once more. And so it goes for everlasting. I cannot escape myself, though I feel that I am consuming my life. To prepare the honey I feed to unknown crowds, I am doomed to brush the bloom from my dearest flowers, to tear them from their stems, and trample the roots that bore them under foot."

Painfully accurate for those of us who are fortunate enough to work in a profession we love, no? Thankfully, there's a relatively simple and inexpensive way to slow the roll of that old iron cannonball in your head, and it's called GIN. I've never been one of those Hemmingway writers (talented?) who can create while drunk, but a nice nightcap or four AFTER a hard day's work might help delineate your work and play lives, Ben.

Good luck, and see you at inevitable church basement meetings in a few years.

Hi -

The pages where Marko & Alana argue/split in #22 are incredible. I read them at least 5 times. I saw my parents' split and splits from my own life written in the faces on the page and I damn near cried. (I actually cried.) You've done something truly incredible with Saga, and it's great as a fan, and an empathetic human to see such a real/unreal story.

Amanda

Madison, WI

P.S. I know I'm like several issues behind in writing this—I'm a PhD student and the whole "Figure out the research that will become the foundation of your career" got in the way. My husband came to the rescue and surprised me with all the back issues I'd missed. He's a cool dude like that.

Much obliged, Amanda (and your husband). Continued success with your PhD, and don't forget the gin.

Dear BKV and Fiona,

I have wanted to write for a while, since the series started. But since I have to write a letter, I wanted to write a proper one with a typewriter and it took a while for me to get mine back.

Holy shit, Saga is so good!! I have loved every single issue. It is simply beautiful, inside and out. For a space opera of robots, wings, and horns, it is severely human. The beauty comes from the faults in the characters, the ones we see in ourselves and hide because they make us ugly. "Because the opposite of war is fucking."

What a great thought to guide a series.

And the only person who can truly capture this beauty is Fiona Staples. I think I speak for all Saga fans when I say how happy I am that her art is in our lives. And BTW, Ghos is my favorite character. If we are to see him die, it better be good —R.I.P. D. Oswald Heist.

And finally, not to change subjects, but I have to mention Y: The Last Man. BKV, the final issue came out just before I turned 22 and I had "A pair of deuces ain't much... but sometimes, it can be a winning hand" as my mantra all year and it was one of my best yet! This was compounded by reading "a dream job is still a job" just before I started mine. Thanks for keeping my head on straight all these years.

I am going to buy every issue of this series. I look forward to giving you both my money for years to come. Thank you!

Trevor Reece

Los Angeles, CA

P.S. 355's real name is "Peace" isn't it?

You're too kind, Trevor. And lots of readers have been nice enough to bring up that genius "pair of deuces" line to me over the years, but I'm humbled to admit that it's not even mine; it's actually something my own father wrote to me on my 22nd birthday, and it also became a mantra that helped me survive a hellish year. Thanks for letting me steal your words, Dad.

And no comment on Agent 355's real name, since whatever is in your head is more important than what's in mine... but I will say that I've only ever seen one person "correctly" put together all the clues I sprinkled throughout the sixty issues to figure out what I personally intended her name to be, and everyone else immediately shot down this person's theory as the ravings of a lunatic.

A good reminder for me to keep my fat mouth shut about such things.

Dear Saga Team,

Chapter 19 left me an emotional wreck. Seriously, Skish. SKISH. I DIED from the cuteness upon reading that. So let me ask you this. How does it feel having a zombie (or zombies, you never know) in you fanbase? BECAUSE I DIED FROM CUTENESS. If you could see me now, I'm flailing my arms like those noodly things at car dealerships. I'll give you a moment to let that sink in. FLAILING.

—AHEM—

Sorry, I lost my cool there. It happens. No, I'm absolutely in love with Saga. I first stumbled upon the series one day while waiting for some friends to meet up with me for a movie. As if the universe wanted me to read Saga, it turned out I arrived for the wrong showing. So I sat in the nearby Barnes and Noble (the theater is at a mall) looking to kill two hours. That's when a store employee suggested I check out Saga. So I did, and also

proceeded to buy Vol 1 & 2. Absolutely no regrets. So with the rant over, I explain the contents of this envelope. Included is:

- 1 Example of what my friends call "paper telephone"
- 1 broken Cinderella ring
- 1 portrait of myself drawn with an eraser
- 1 handwritten letter

Paper telephone is a game that starts with one person writing a sentence, the next will draw a picture of said sentence, then fold it back so the next person can't see. That person will then try to describe the picture and the cycle continues. I hope you try to have fun with that in times to come.

The broken Cinderella ring was from a cupcake that started a tradition between my friends and me. It goes as follows: whoever is in possession of the ring hands it off to whomever means the most to them at the time. The official date we hand it off is on the birthday of whoever holds it. It was last handed to me the day I moved to Texas and I have kept it since. It has not been passed down in three years.

As I make the transition from High School to college, I leave Cinderella with you. Do what you want with it. Continue the tradition of handing it back and forth or just keep it wherever you put things. I'll be happy with it either way, content with the fact that it's been passed on at least one more time. And with that I wish you good fortune, and may your genius live forever through your creations.

Sincerely,
Delson Pilgrim
Arlington TX

Fuck yeah, weird swag! Thanks for the broken Cinderella ring, Delson. I promise to treasure it for all my life, or at least until this next letter.

Dear Brian K. Vaughan,

First off I'd like to thank you for the brilliant Saga. I'm not very familiar with comic books, and reading Saga has not only given me a fantastic world and story, it has opened up thousands more from artists such as yourself.

I learned about Saga from a friend of mine. We were at a local arcade bar engaging in both activities provided when he spotted Vol. 3 of Saga on the shelf by the counter. His eyes lit up and he grew giddy in a manner I've never seen. "Volume 3 came out? When did this happen?" he asked.

"About a month ago," said one of the bartenders. His eyes lit up like my friend's before him. "It's unbelievable."

My friend bought it immediately and we left the bar shortly thereafter. Outside of the bar I asked my friend where we should go next, he tells me that he's feeling tired and wants to head back home. It's 11:00PM on a Friday and he doesn't look tired, he looks excited. I tell my shitty friend, "Fine, go home. Read your shitty comic that you CAN READ ANYTIME YOU WANT." He went home.

This leads me to the story I want to tell you. A couple weeks later I'm at the same bar with different friends before going to a party later that night. As I am closing out my tab, I see Saga Vol. 1 on the same shelf my friend bought Vol. 3. I decided to add it to the tab and head to the party.

I arrive early to a small crowd. I bullshit a bit and decide to open the comic book kept in my jacket. I don't remember much of that party, but I do remember leaving it a half hour before the bars closed to pick up Vol. 2 & 3. I returned to the party and kept to myself, finishing Vol. 3 after everyone had gone to bed. The next day I read them again.

Since then I picked up Chapters 18-24 and have been reading them like a monk with an oath of silence. It truly is a fantastic work that I go back to again and again. Thank you.

Sincerely,
Kyle McCallum
Boise, ID

Hold on, there's an arcade/bar that also sells COMIC BOOKS? Kids, pack your bags, 'cause we're moving to Boise!

Kyle, for bringing this vitally important discovery to our attention, Hamburger has named YOU winner of this month's impedimenta from the Almighty Prize Drawer: a Playbill from the musical *Annie*, an exhibitor badge from the 2014 San Diego Comic-Con, and most importantly, one broken Cinderella ring that represents how much you mean to me. Please share it responsibly.

In thirty short days, we check back in with Alana, Dengo and their fun new friends, finally reveal who the hell that spider dude from last issue was, and somehow find a way to make this arc even bleaker.

But it's all going to work out in the end... right?

Wishing Fiona would take over a whole letter column someday,
BKV



ELLIS • SHALVEY • BELLAIRE

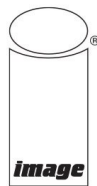
THE WORLD HAS BEEN POISONED TO DEATH



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FROM THE CREATORS OF MOON KNIGHT: FROM THE DEAD

MAY 2015



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A New Series from
Jason Shawn Alexander
(*Abe Sapien: The Drowning and The Escapists*)

She wasn't
supposed to
survive

They were
supposed to
stay dead

empty zone™

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JUNE



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